

# Dorchester Reporter

The News and Values Around the Neighborhood™

Charlie Dorf | August 6, 2015

## Tenean hit hard by water quality woes



*Tenean Beach, shown above on Tuesday morning, has struggled with water quality problems this summer. One beach goer who spoke to the Reporter on Tuesday that she enjoys sunbathing, but avoids going in the water: "I'd never go in the water here," she said. "It's really quite sad, but the one time I did swim here it took two weeks to get all the stuff off of my feet." Charlie Dorf photo*

A new report analyzing water quality at Boston area beaches has found that Dorchester's Tenean Beach has been closed far more frequently than other local beaches this summer due to high counts of bacteria. Two other Dorchester beaches—Savin Hill and Malibu—have fared far better, according to the study done by Save the Harbor/Save the Bay.

The non-profit public interest harbor advocacy organization released their mid-summer findings on Monday. The report examined metropolitan beaches from Nahant to Nantasket, including Lynn, Nahant, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy and Hull. The report covers the period from memorial day weekend till July 18 and uses the metric of overall beach safety.

The key indicator in the report is based on the percentage of days that each beach's waters tested below the threshold Enterococcus bacterial count of 104 CFU/100m. If the water tests above this threshold, a swim advisory is issued and swimming at the beach is closed for the day.

Savin Hill Beach, having scored a relatively high 88 percent score during last year's swim season, managed to achieve a perfect score of 100 percent so far this summer with zero beach closures during the test period. Malibu Beach, which scored a 93 percent last year, saw a small increase in closures, dropping their 2015 score to a still-high 87 percent.

Tenean Beach, however, has suffered from perennial issues with water quality—mainly caused by its location near the mouth of the Neponset River. Tenean has experienced a substantial increase in beach closures this summer, dropping their score from 95 percent last year to 69 percent so far this summer.

One of the main reasons for the increase in beach closures at Tenean and some other Boston area beaches is a larger frequency of storms and rainfall this summer.

"Though the total rainfall amount so far this season is similar to 2014, there were more frequent small storms during the study period, which has had a dramatic impact on water quality on some of our beaches this year," explained Bruce Berman, the director of Strategy, Communications and Programs at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay.

Also contributing to Tenean's woes, said Berman: Old networks of drainage pipes, which can often have illegal or improper connections. These, when combined with excess rainfall and the subsequent discharge of contaminated storm water into the ocean, leads to higher contaminants. Additionally, Berman pointed out that unlike Savin Hill and Malibu Beaches, Tenean is affected by runoff pollution from the Neponset River.

"It's not a clean river," said Berman.

Plans to reduce the number of future beach closures are underway. The Boston Water and Sewer Commission is working to locate "hot" or problem pipes that could be contributing to the increased runoff of pollution, according to Berman.

"It's often the closest pipe to the beaches that is causing the issue, and one way is to find the issue is to check one pipe at a time, and Boston Water and Sewer has begun to do that and have made some strides. They go in and check every connection," Berman said.

Funds to help address water quality issues statewide were authorized in an Environmental Bond Bill that became law in 2014, but Berman said some funds have yet to be appropriated.

"Dorchester is a big part of the city and it's a time consuming process. We'd like to see more resources to get that process to go faster," Berman said. "We are confident that the Baker and Walsh administrations share our concerns and care about the beaches and how important they are to these communities. We are confident that this will be one of their capital concerns."

Despite intermittent issues with water quality, locals should not be discouraged from attending this weekend's Tenean Beach Family Fun Day on August 8 from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday's all-day event will begin with a beach clean-up starting at 8 a.m. A beach festival is also planned for Sat., Aug. 29 from 2-9 p.m. at Savin Hill/Malibu beaches.